



North Dakota Department of Health Health Alert Network

AUGUST 26, 2004

HEALTH UPDATE

Pertussis in North Dakota

Throughout the ongoing pertussis outbreak, the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) has consulted regularly with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Based on recent discussions, the following adjustments have been made for pertussis testing conducted by the NDDoH.

Priority Testing Criteria

In an effort to identify priority persons with pertussis and to prevent transmission of pertussis to those who are high-risk, primarily infants < 1 year of age, specimens meeting the following criteria will be tested first by the North Dakota Public Health Laboratory (PHL).

Criteria for Priority Testing				
Health-care worker	WITH	Known contact* of pertussis case	AND	Cough of any duration
Children and staff in day-care facilities#	WITH	Known contact* of pertussis case	AND	Cough of any duration
Suspected pertussis cases				
		WITH	Cough of ≥ 7 days without other apparent cause	
			OR	
			Cough with paroxysms	
			OR	
			Whoop	
			OR	

Post-tussive gagging/vomiting
OR
Apnea

*A contact is defined as:

- direct contact with respiratory, oral, or nasal secretions from a symptomatic-case patient
- direct face-to-face contact, regardless of duration, with a case patient who is symptomatic (i.e., has had a cough for < 21 days)
- shared confined space in close proximity for a prolonged period of time with a symptomatic case-patient

#Day-care criteria also may be applied to situations where young children are assembled, such as a church nursery.

Specimens sent to the PHL must indicate the patient's priority group and symptoms. The provider can utilize the new laboratory pertussis form available at: <http://www.health.state.nd.us/disease/Immunization/FormsMemos/FormsMain.htm> or can include the information on the current Laboratory Test Request Form No. 5826.

Both the case criteria and symptomatology must be met for priority testing and must be included on the form accompanying submitted specimens. Submitted specimens that do not meet the criteria or specimens with no criteria listed will be tested only after the testing of priority samples.

Because of the high volume of tests being conducted, it is possible that some specimens may be sent by the PHL to an alternative laboratory for testing, resulting in a possible delay in receiving results. Therefore, providers should consider sending specimens that do not meet the priority-testing criteria to a private laboratory.

Patients who do not have symptoms consistent with pertussis should not be tested.

Reporting of Results

The PHL has revised criteria for reporting positive polymerase chain reaction (PCR) results. This change has resulted from recent consultation with the CDC and is based on their ongoing analysis of pertussis outbreaks in other states that utilize similar PCR testing procedures. This change, along with focused testing of persons with signs/symptoms suggestive of pertussis, will improve the positive predictive value of a reported positive PCR test result. These changes will likely result in fewer positive results being reported.

Treatment

Pertussis treatment guidelines remain the same as previously outlined. (See [http://www.ndhan.gov/data/issues/Treatment%20and%20Chemoprophylaxis%20of%20Pertussis%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.ndhan.gov/data/issues/Treatment%20and%20Chemoprophylaxis%20of%20Pertussis%20(2).pdf) for previously released treatment guidelines.)

Symptomatic close contacts of laboratory-confirmed or epidemiologically-linked cases should be treated and asymptomatic close contacts should be prophylaxed regardless of pertussis immunization status.

Testing Fees

Currently, the NDDoH is able to provide testing at no charge. However, in the future, funds may not be available to accommodate the high volume of testing and a charge may have to be considered. We will inform you in advance of the need to charge for testing.

Thank you for your assistance and understanding regarding this situation. Please contact the **Public Health Laboratory at 701.328.6272** if you have questions regarding pertussis testing.